

REMARKS

The Office Action of March 17, 2008, has been carefully studied. In response thereto, claims 1-18, 20 and 21 are cancelled, and new claims 22-25 are added.

With respect to claim 22, the only article claimed presently in the case, it is respectfully submitted, on information and belief, that this claim recites novel and unobvious subject matter drawn, from Table 1 on page 24. On information and belief, it would be clear to one of ordinary skill in the art that a cast non-consolidated article could not have the same properties as set forth in new claim 22 -- a density of about 0.84 to about 0.93, a tensile strength in the machined direction of about 20.2 to about 60.9 N/5 cm, and an elongation break of about 1.4 to about 2.9% -- but instead would have a lower density, a lower tensile strength, and likely a higher percent elongation at break.

With respect to new claims 23-25, it is appreciated that they are method claims which were not originally presented. Nevertheless, since the special technical feature of all the claims is that the thermal compression of the fiber-based article is conducted at a temperature above the glass transition temperature of the thermoplastic polymer, the Examiner should examine those claims.

With respect to the Ekiner Published European Patent Application 0 648 812 A2, on page 9, lines 3-10, there is a discussion concerning the annealing of a blend above the T_g for the blend, but this annealing may result in products exhibiting an irreversible phase separation as evidenced by the presence of $2T_g$'s. Furthermore, this annealing step does not imply a thermal compression step, much less at a temperature between 200 and 350°C at a pressure greater than or equal to 5 bar. The patentee, to prepare membranes, casts a blend solution, and then removes the solvent by evaporation. Accordingly, Ekiner certainly does not suggest any concept of consolidating a fiber-based article by thermal compression, much less at a temperature between 200 and 350°C and at a pressure greater than or equal to 5 bar. Consequently, it is respectfully submitted that the subject matter of the claims at issue would have been unobvious to one of ordinary skill in the art.

In view of the above remarks, favorable reconsideration is courteously requested. If,

however, there are any residual issues which can be expeditiously resolved by telephone conference, the Examiner is courteously invited to telephone counsel at the number indicated below. If counsel is unavailable, the Examiner may wish to telephone counsel's assistant, Ms. Richardson, at (703) 812-5326, and she will be happy to enlist the services of another attorney.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees associated with this response or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 13-3402.

Respectfully submitted,

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